

Games as members of the United States Olympic and Paralympic Teams.

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the resolution.

#### RECOGNIZING MICHIGAN'S 2012 PARALYMPIANS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, a moving 11-day journey recently came to an end. Nearly 4,300 athletes from 166 countries traveled to London, England, to fulfill their dream of representing their country at the 2012 Paralympic games. I congratulate each of these athletes on a job well done and for their hard work, determination and triumph. Their accomplishments inspired us all and help to broaden our sense of what is possible for individuals living with a disability.

Shortly after the 2012 Olympic games concluded, Olympic officials worked feverishly to transform the Olympic venues for the upcoming Paralympic games. Their task was formidable, and their work was impressive. And once again, London proved to be an exceedingly welcoming host. In fact, more than 2.7 million spectators attended the games, shattering the previous mark and making these games the best attended in history. Many venues were filled to capacity. The energy and excitement of the fans was impressive and a wonderful inspiration for these athletes to showcase their talents. While the world watched with joy and amazement, the athletes competed fiercely, setting an astonishing 251 world records in the process.

Those in attendance and audiences around the world were treated to many dazzling performances and were introduced to some truly inspiring personal stories. One such story is that of LT. Brad Synder. Almost 1 year ago to the day, Lieutenant Synder was bravely serving his country in Afghanistan when a bomb exploded, rendering him blind. One year later, he stood in London, again representing his country, with two gold medals and a silver in swimming around his neck and a world record in his grasp. In the face of such a tragic and life-altering injury, this brave soldier refused to let this injury define him and forged ahead, setting his sights on a new goal. There is also LCDR Steven Peace who began cycling during rehabilitation from a stroke he suffered during Active Duty and competed for Team USA in that event. And there is Scot Severn, another former soldier, who won bronze in shot put at these games after recovering from injuries sustained from a lightning strike while on duty. These are but a few of the seemingly endless stories of perseverance and strength that define the lives of these athletes and enrich the lives of all of us.

It was in 1948 that the seed of what would grow to become the second largest sporting event in the world was planted in London. Sir Ludwig Guttman sought to inspire recently wounded World War II veterans by or-

ganizing a sporting event to raise their spirits and aid their rehabilitation. After years of increasing participation and awareness, this sporting event, which was conceived to parallel the Olympic games, would formally become known as the Paralympic games in 1960. In 2012, 227 athletes represented the United States in London.

There were many Paralympic athletes with ties to Michigan on Team USA. They represented their Nation and Michigan admirably. They include Steve Peace in cycling, Asya Miller in goalball, Robin Theryoung in goalball, Tucker Dupree in swimming, Scott Severn in track and field, Bryan Barten in wheelchair tennis, and Mackenzie Soldan in wheelchair tennis. Along with these impressive athletes, I also congratulate the legions of coaches, trainers, officials, support staff, family and friends who played indispensable roles for these athletes and helped to make their performances possible.

There are more than 24 million Americans living with a disability and many more who face some sort of physical, visual or mental challenge. The athletes who competed in London sent a strong, compelling signal that, while their circumstance may seem daunting, there are many mountains to climb and races to win if they are determined and willing to pursue excellence in whatever field they choose, whether it be the track, a classroom or any other worthy pursuit. These games also bring greater awareness and more resources to efforts to increase the availability of physical activity for disabled Americans across the Nation, the benefits of which have been well-documented in recent years.

The 2012 Paralympic games dazzled us with impressive athletic feats, inspired us with stories of courage and perseverance, and reminded us that we can all overcome adversity and pursue excellence both in competition and in life. The 2012 summer Paralympic games, like the Olympic games that preceded it, was a stage on which athletes from across the globe came together in friendly competition. Barb and I salute every athlete who represented Team USA in London. As one organizer eloquently stated, "The Paralympians have lifted the cloud of limitation." For that, we owe them a deep debt of gratitude.

#### 2012 PARALYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. BLUMENTHAL. Mr. President, today I rise to recognize three of our Nation's inspiring Paralympians, with Connecticut roots, who competed, along with 227 American teammates and more than 4,000 athletes from over 160 countries, in this year's Paralympic games in London. During these games, which took place from August 29 to September 9, the United States brought home 98 medals, including 31 gold medals. The exceptional drive, discipline, and dreams of these athletes

are as extraordinary as the medals. Their personal stories of sacrifice and hard work, effort and energy, and aspirations turned into realities, despite setbacks and adversity, are truly remarkable.

In 1948 at Aylesbury, England's Stoke Mandeville Hospital, the idea of the Paralympics was formed, and so it is historically significant that England hosted this year's Paralympic games. Sir Ludwig Guttman envisioned including disabled veterans in international sports competition, and in 1948 his dream was realized in the International Wheelchair Games. In 1960, Rome hosted the first official Paralympic games as we know them today. As we look back at this year's games—one of the largest Paralympics in history—we celebrate this legacy. We are reminded of how important these games were for the rehabilitation of our disabled World War II veterans.

For Tara Profitt of Newington, CT, and member of the 2012 U.S. Paralympic Table Tennis Team, England as host country is personally significant. Ms. Profitt competed in the women's singles competition at the 1984 Paralympics hosted in Stoke Mandeville, England, but always hoped to have the opportunity to play alongside her college friend and fellow table tennis champion, Pamela Fontaine, in the women's team class. This year, in addition to participating individually in the women's single class events, Ms. Profitt and Ms. Fontaine were selected to represent the United States together in the women's team event, reuniting again on familiar territory. Ms. Profitt has credited Ms. Fontaine with inspiring her to become the athlete she is today, encouraging her to engage in sports again after the diving injury that she suffered as a teenager. They have worked hard to qualify over the past few years, traveling around the world to compete, and this year achieved the goal that they have held dearly for decades: to play together, celebrating their country and friendship on an international stage.

Representing the United States in track and field, three-time gold medalist Paul Nitz traveled from Bloomfield, CT, to participate in his third Paralympic games. This year, he was given the tremendous honor of serving as track captain for the U.S. Paralympic Track and Field team, inspiring both first-time and veteran athletes. Mr. Nitz has an accomplished athletic record: He won the Gold in the 100m event in 1992, 1996, and 2000 and broke the 100m world record during the 2012 Swiss Series. This year, I am proud to announce that he brought home the bronze in the 100m. Equally commendable, Mr. Nitz works in his community—as an employee of the Hartford Insurance Group—to positively change public perception regarding disability. In addition to his impressive athletic achievements, through his efforts at the Hartford, he has led great strides across the Nation in dispelling prejudice, misconception, and judgment.